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The Thirteen Martyrs of Arad: A Monumental History

James Koranyi

The monument which once dominated the central square of the town of Arad honoured the memory of thirteen *Honvéd* rebel generals, who had been executed there on 06th October 1849, on the command of the Austrian imperial government following the failed Hungarian revolution of 1848/9.¹ The officers had been part of the *Honvédség*, the Hungarian Army, which had struggled for the nation's independence – or freedom as they had called it – after March 1848. As part of the 'springtime of the peoples', Hungarian radicals and liberals strove for greater autonomy from Vienna, both political and cultural. At the beginning, the revolution registered some successes. Yet following a number of reversals at the hands of the imperial Austrian, Russian, Romanian and Croatian troops, most notably in Sighişoara and Timişoara, the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution was formally confirmed on 13th August 1849 in the Surrender of Világos (Şiria).²

The execution of the Arad Thirteen and the former Prime Minister Lajos Batthyány on the same day marked the symbolic end of the revolution. The thirteen comprised a number of different nationalities, including six of Hungarian descent, three 'Germans', one Austrian, one of Serb descent, one of Armenian descent and one Croatian descent. What all thirteen had in common was their membership of the Hungarian Revolutionary Army fighting against what some perceived to be Habsburg, imperial oppression and for a *liberal* cause. By 1890 all thirteen had become not fighters against oppression but patriots, nationalists, and above all Hungarians. Their execution and subsequent rather long-winded rehabilitation, and then renewed fall from grace, traced the development of liberalism from a contestation of empire into nationalism as a form of empire. Judging by the early, non-official commemorative rituals of the event, it becomes clear that it was primarily the juxtaposition of imperial oppression on the one hand and freedom – or *szabadság* – on the other that mattered. The legend of the Habsburg generals clinking their glasses as the thirteen generals were being executed allegedly led to the vow by Hungarians never to do so when toasting. The first commemoration on 6th October 1850 had therefore been primarily about remembering the executed generals while

I wish to thank Gaëlle Fisher for her support in Arad.

¹ These were Lajos Aulich, János Damjanich, Arisztid Desseffy, Ernő Kiss, Károly Knézich, György Láhner, Valmos Lázár, Count Károly Leiningen-Westerburg, József Nagysándor, Ernő Pöltenberg, József Schweidel, Ignác Török and Count Károly Vécsey. The magyarised names of the individuals have been used here.

² I will use the present-day names of places unless otherwise stated.

maintaining the 'cult of the revolution'.³ In the foreground of such narratives and memories was the story of imperial oppression and cruelty.

As this chapter will demonstrate, with the nationalisation of the Arad Thirteen by the Hungarian Kingdom from 1867 onwards, the site and subsequent monument to the martyrs were transformed: the erstwhile symbols against empire were turned into symbols of empire. By exploring crucial moments in the history of the monument and its original and successive sites, it is possible to trace the changing meaning of this imperial site of memory. Indeed, spaces become sites of memory once they have been invested with meaning. As one of the leading pioneers on memory studies Pierre Nora maintained, 'we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies [for] without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away'.⁴ Therefore, it is in symbols where collective memory is 'crystallized',⁵ and it is these symbols and narratives, as Roger Brubaker and Margit Feischmidt have contended, that are 'strikingly ethnicized' in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.⁶ Arad is a town which synthesises Hungarian, Romanian, and indeed Austrian, German, and Serbian narratives and symbols. Furthermore, borrowing from Jan Assmann's model of memory, we can see a shift from a communicative culture of mourning and remembrance to a (contested) cultural memory of imperial-nationalist legitimation towards the end of the Nineteenth Century.⁷ The materiality of the monument built in 1890 certainly confirms that the memory surrounding the Arad Thirteen became political and 'hard' memory and not one of mourning and personal remembrance.⁸ What this case study will thus investigate is an imperial site of memory (and counter-memory), which became nationalised or 'ethnicised', as all groups recognised it as belonging to a particular imperial-national canon. It therefore breaks the mould of belonging to either imperial or national commemorative cultures, as it combines the two. As such, this contribution will focus on the altering perceptions during important phases such as 1867 to 1890 when the monument was planned and erected, 1920 to 1925 during which the monument was removed from Romanian Arad, as well as the immediate period after World War II when the communists attempted to use the generals' legacy, and the post-communist period where various

³ M. Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation an den Peripherien: Ungarische Nationaldenkmäler in multietnischen Gebieten der Monarchie', in W. Fischer et al (eds), *Grenzen und Räume in Österreich-Ungarn 1867-1918* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2010), p. 120.

⁴ P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26, p. 12.

⁵ P. Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. xv.

⁶ R. Brubaker and M. Feischmidt, '1848 in 1998: The Politics of Commemoration in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia', *Comparative Study of Society and History*, 44:4 (2002), pp. 725-6.

⁷ J. Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), pp. 125-33.

⁸ See P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

attempts were made to neutralise the imperial and antagonising aspects of the memory of the Arad Martyrs.

Copying Habsburg memory

Habsburg commemorative rituals, aesthetics, and topography have certainly attracted a great deal of interest.⁹ Scholars have investigated the meaning of monuments in east-central Europe in the nineteenth century as a way of ascertaining the processes of nation-building and the establishment of nationalism.¹⁰ Yet what deserves more attention is the link between the imperial commemorative practices initiated in Vienna and their imitation by the emerging nationalisms in the regions. Minorities such as Romanians, excluded from official nationalist memory cultures, therefore perceived the Hungarian imitation to be imperial in nature, as it relegated local and emerging national cultural discourses to a position of inferiority.¹¹ In this sense, the imperial-nationalist memory cultures that arose towards the end of the nineteenth century were grounded in the imperial precedents rather than the liberal spirit of 1848.

Commemorative practices and rituals in the Habsburg Empire before the revolutions in 1848/9 did not enjoy the grandiose public attention they received under Emperor Franz Josef in the second half of the long nineteenth century. The imperial court and its celebrations of birthdays, marriages, and anniversaries had been rather unspectacular and lacklustre affairs.¹² Indeed, the period from the late eighteenth century until 1848 witnessed very little change in the architecture of squares in the Habsburg Empire.¹³ This changed under the imperial rule of Franz Josef and with the end of the revolutions in 1849, though there was a brief hiatus between the end of revolutions and the emergence of 'overt political action'.¹⁴ As others have demonstrated, commemorative practices became far more assertive and aggressive

⁹ See, for instance, P. Judson and M. Rozenblit (eds), *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005) or M. Bucur and N. Wingfield (eds), *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ See, for example, M. Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

¹¹ Interpretations of the Habsburg period following the ideological turn in the second half of the twentieth century no longer saw this as imperial but as *imperialist*.

¹² D. Unowsky, 'Reasserting Empire: Habsburg Imperial Celebrations after the Revolutions of 1848-1849', in Bucur and Wingfield, *Staging the Past*, pp. 13-16.

¹³ C. Corradi, 'Urbanism and Civilisation: The Making of City-Squares in Imperial Vienna (16th-20th Centuries)', in R. Jaworski and P. Stachel (eds), *Die Besetzung des öffentlichen Raums: Politische Plätze, Denkmäler und Straßennamen im europäischen Vergleich* (Leipzig: Frank & Thimme, 2007), p. 69.

¹⁴ G. Szabad, *Hungarian Political Trends Between the Revolution and the Compromise (1849-1867)* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1977), p. 41.

in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Daniel Unowsky ascribes this not only to the rise of nationalism, but also to the 'neoabsolutist' turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Bearing in mind this link between nationalism and empire, it seems obvious why later Hungarian *national* manifestations became so imbued with imperial ideas and connotations. The pomp and circumstance of Franz Josef's imperial court was echoed in future Hungarian nationalist rhetoric and practice. Access to court and imperial festivities was strictly limited.¹⁷ In much the same way, the exclusive nature of the Hungarian commemoration of the Arad Thirteen especially from 1890 onwards served to remind minority groups of the reality of imperial rule. Although scholars have successfully revised the idea of the Habsburg Empire as a 'prison of nations', it is important to correct an entirely revisionist view of Habsburg as an antidote to nationalism.¹⁸ The cornerstone of the imperial-nationalism associated with Hungarian memory politics had been laid in the aftermath of revolution as the undefeated empires sought to reassert themselves domestically through visual appearance.

Hungarian memory politics

The early and unofficial Hungarian commemorations of the martyrs of Arad had a strong focus on the remembrance of these individuals and on the revolutionary struggle for freedom.¹⁹ As Margit Feischmidt and Zoltán Szabó have demonstrated, the story of the Arad Thirteen became highly important to popular Hungarian memory.²⁰ Indeed, even early attempts at reconstructing the events of the failed revolution quickly rendered all thirteen generals Hungarian.²¹ This stood in stark contrast to the last letter written by Count Károly Leiningen-Westerburg to his wife

¹⁵ See, for example, Bucur and Wingfield, *Staging the Past*, Judson and Rozenblit, *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, N. Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2003) and R. Brubaker et al (eds), *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), especially chapter one.

¹⁶ Unowsky, 'Reasserting Empire', p. 18.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁸ See, for instance, J. Leonhard and U. von Hirschhausen, *Empires und Nationalstaaten im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), pp. 9-11.

¹⁹ Early memory cultures resembled far more closely the mourning practices described in Jay Winter's book on post-World War One memory. See J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), as well as Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation', pp. 119-20.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 119 and Z. Szabó, 'Az aradi vértanúk emlékezete' at www.neprajz.hu/48/tanulmanyok/tan8.shtml [accessed: 11 January 2012] quoted in ibid.

²¹ A. Szilágyi, *Die letzten Tage der magyarischen Revolution. Enthüllung der Ereignisse in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen seit dem 1. Juli 1849* (Pest: Verlag von Gustav Heckenast, 1850), p. 73.

on the eve of his execution. He made not a single mention of Hungary, the Hungarian nation, or his alleged Hungarianness.²² On the whole, then, the memory of the Arad Thirteen in the early post-revolutionary phase was still centred on the ideas of remembrance and revolution rather than the nation.

With the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, however, the emphasis within the commemoration of these events began to shift. The relative autonomy accorded Hungary in the dual monarchy helped shape an environment in which it was possible to create distance between Vienna and Budapest. Though formally united under the same crown and sharing the same policies, especially in foreign policy, Hungary enjoyed autonomy in many domestic issues. Calls for a monument in Arad had already been voiced in the immediate aftermath of execution.²³ Indeed, an obelisk was erected prior to the building of the great monument in 1881, but its abstract motif and peripheral location near Arad Fortress failed to inspire the outpouring of emotions and ceremony that the Freedom Monument would later accomplish. It was not until 16th June 1867 – a mere two and a half months after the Austro-Hungarian compromise had come into effect – that a committee was set up in Arad under the leadership of mayor Peter Aczél in order to raise funds for a commemorative monument.²⁴

Two decades later, the committee had raised enough money, some 120,000 Forint, for a so-called *Hungaria* statue. The design would depict – in the words of a contemporary newspaper from Timișoara – ‘a tall, noble female figure whose youthful and beautiful traits represent the incarnation of the Hungarian type’.²⁵ She was to wear the crown of Matthias Corvinus, while the four bottom pillars were to be adorned with symbols representing ‘the awakening of freedom’, ‘self-sacrifice’, ‘the dying soldier’ and ‘readiness to combat’.²⁶ While initial plans for this statue had focused solely on the figure of *Hungaria* – later denounced in the *Temeswarer Zeitung* as a ‘butcher’s wife on her way to a costume ball’ –, the death of the original architect Adolf Huszár in 1885 enabled the young architect and designer György Zala to complete the project.²⁷ Praised for the ‘combative readiness’ of his work, Zala included the portraits of the thirteen generals around the base of the monument.²⁸

²² C. Leiningen, letter to his wife Lisa Leiningen, 5-6 October 1849, in A. P. Petri, *Heimathbuch der Marktgemeinde Neuarad im Banat* (Heimatorts-gemeinschaft Neuarad, 1985), pp. 200-1.

²³ Feischmidt, ‘Die Verortung der Nation’, p. 119.

²⁴ ‘Spezial-Telegram der “TZ”’, *Temeswarer Zeitung* (7 October 1890), pp. 1, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See ‘Georg Zala. (Der Schöpfer des Arader Märtyrer-Denkmal’s)’, *Temeswarer Zeitung* (05 October 1890), pp. 2, 3. I will be using the Hungarian form of Zala’s name rather than the German form of his name, Georg Zala. Similarly, I will refer to Adolf Huszár in the Hungarian form of his name and not in the German form of Adolf Hußár.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The four allegories designed by Huszár remained in place, as did the female figure at the top, albeit in a somewhat altered fashion.

The opening ceremony of the statue on 6th October 1890 was, by all accounts, a spectacle to behold. It included General Damjanich's widow, remnants of the 48er *Honvéds* – including members of the skull-and-crossbones division who had vowed never to surrender and instead fight to the death – the mayor of Arad, Julius Galacz, various clerics, György Zala himself, the statue committee, as well as representatives from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Petöfi Society, the Hungarian Company of writers and artists and other relevant groups.²⁹ According to reports, the ceremony was attended by thousands of members of the general public.³⁰ However, the pomp and ceremony surrounding the event also presented difficulties to the Hungarian government. To be sure, successive Hungarian Prime Ministers had supported and encouraged this project, in particularly Kálmán Tisza (1875-90) and Count Gyula Szapáry (1890-92). Yet it had always been a balancing act between demonstrating assertive 'Hungarianness' and exhibiting loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. In a note dated 16th July 1890, a mere three months before the event, the relatively new Prime Minister Szapáry explicitly asked for invitations not to be sent out to his government so as to avoid the embarrassment of being 'forced to deal with the issue'.³¹

In other words, the upper echelons of the Hungarian political class did not want to be seen acting disloyally towards the Habsburg Empire. Instead, in an attempt to downplay the importance of this event towards Vienna, only a single member of the House of Representatives was to be sent to Arad. Szapáry also emphasised the local nature of the event: the choir, the army representatives, and other attendees were to be from Arad County. Nonetheless, Szapáry called on the Sheriff of Arad County to respect the 'earnestness' (*komolysággal*) of the event.³² He continued, '[k]nowing both the Sheriff's and mayor's composed, sober patriotism' (*Ismerve úgy a főispán mint a polgármester higgadt józan hazafiasságát*), the event should remain solemn without any overtly nationalist demonstrations.³³ This was demonstrated quite pointedly by officially naming the festive day 'Festival of Reconciliation'.³⁴ While the unveiling of the statue had been much publicised in advance, during, and after the event,

²⁹ Magyar Országos Levéltár, K26 2254. 16th July 1890.

³⁰ 'Die Arader Feier. Vom Spezial-Berichterstatter der "Tem. Zeitung"', *Tem eswarer Zeitung* (07 October 1890), p. 1.

³¹ Magyar Országos Levéltár, K26 2254. 16 July 1890.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* This euphemistic language was echoed, perhaps unwittingly, 114 years later on, as the statue was reconstituted in Arad under the watchful eye of the EU.

heavyweight politicians had to keep enough distance so as not to antagonise the Austrian leadership too much.

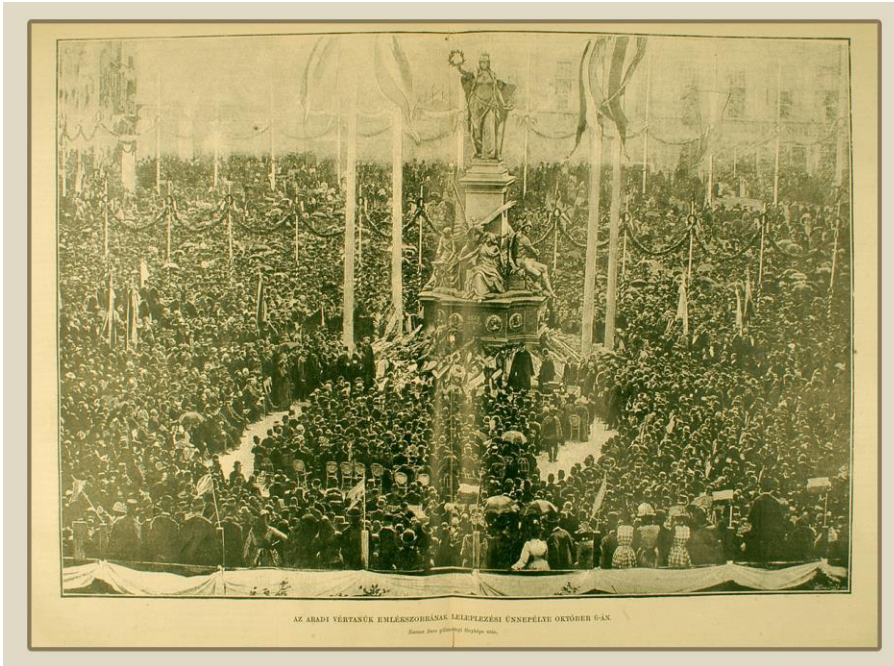


Image 1.1: A photograph of the opening ceremony of the statue on 6th October 1890.³⁵

In one sense, therefore, the opening ceremony nevertheless represented an anti-imperial event. The presence of the 48er Honvéds and relatives of the executed generals emphasised the fact that this was a counter-cultural, counter-political commemorative act vis-à-vis *imperial Habsburg* rule. Indeed, some parts of the ceremony still reflected the rhetoric of liberation of 1848. Ignoring the Sheriff's request to keep the speeches brief, Mayor Galacz spoke at great length and bemoaned that Hungarians had been denied the chance to have a monument in honour of their fallen sons *for centuries*, thereby making a clear reference to the imperial regimes of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires.³⁶ Women from all over the south of Hungary were dressed in mourning for the occasion, which marked it out

³⁵ Image taken from the Hungarian National Library / Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (OSZK) at http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/kossuthhangja/html/kepek/vasarnapi_ujzag_90_10_19_nagy.jpg [accessed: 12 January 2012].

³⁶ 'Spezial-Telegram der "TZ"', *Temeswarer Zeitung* (7 October 1890), p. 2.

as a moment commemorating imperial aggression and the failure of liberation. Furthermore, with the portraits of the thirteen generals engraved on the base of the statue, the site was clearly linked to a story of empire, resistance, and defeat at the hands of the empire.



Image 1.2: The portraits of János Damjanich and József Nagysándor on the plinth of the monument.³⁷

Yet it was also a decidedly Hungarian and *national* affair. Prime Minister Szapáry, who was otherwise very cautious in embracing the overly public aspects of this event, ensured that the unveiling of the monument took place on the historically important and charged date of 6th October 1890.³⁸ Yet Szapáry was still limited by his Prime Ministership. By contrast, from his exile in Turin, Lajos Kossuth – the erstwhile *de facto* President of Hungary during the revolutionary struggle of 1848/9 –

³⁷ Photo taken by author.

³⁸ Magyar Országos Levéltár, K26 2254. Curiously, this directive was issued in German whilst the majority of inner-Hungarian state affairs were conducted in Hungarian.

recorded a rousing speech for the occasion.³⁹ Having gone into voluntary exile in 1849, he fell out with the architects of the 1867 compromise – most notably with Ferenc Deák – accusing them of ‘selling out’ and failing to pursue a purer form of *national* struggle.⁴⁰ In his speech, which was broadcast both in writing and by phonograph in a public booth in Arad, he appealed to his fellow Hungarian countrymen and women: ‘Be unshakeably true to your Country, Magyar! Respect those who are worthy of respect, but true you should be only to your Country – do you understand this Magyar? – to your Country.’⁴¹ Drawing an unmistakable parallel to his plea to European onlookers in the final stages of the defeat of the revolution on 27th June 1849, he no longer viewed the revolution as an international struggle but a decidedly national one. Back in 1849, Kossuth had insisted:

‘You proud English nation [...] do you tolerate this assault on constitutional freedom? [...] You French Republic, have you forgotten the principles upon which your systems had been built? [...] Awake, O peoples and nations of Europe! Your freedom will be decided on the field of Hungary.’⁴²

Forty-one years later, on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue, Kossuth’s call to remember and preserve the legacy of the martyred generals focused solely on Hungary and its representative figure, the Hungaria:

‘It is the sound of these appeals that I hear in the distance from the lips of the statue of Hungaria. I wonder if all those over there also hear it, and those close by, who came forth on the Hungarian Golgotha on that heart-rendingly woeful, never to be forgotten mournful 6th October, to bear witness before God and the world of the reverence that the Hungarian Nation held for the sacred memory of the Country’s independence?’⁴³

The legacy of the generals had by now been transformed into a national, Hungarian story and was no longer primarily one of liberation from the Habsburg Empire. Their diverse backgrounds and motivations cast aside, the Arad Thirteen had now been united under Hungarian religious-national imagery. As Kossuth reminded his listeners and readers:

³⁹ For a transcript of the speech in English see ‘Making Sound History: Lajos Kossuth’s Speech on Phonographic Cylinders’, OSzK at http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/kossuthhangja/html/nyito_uk.htm [accessed: 11 January 2012].

⁴⁰ On the ambiguous role of Lajos Kossuth as both a nationalist and internationalist, see L. Deme, ‘Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism among the Hungarian Radicals’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 12:1 (1976), pp 36-44.

⁴¹ ‘Making Sound History’.

⁴² Lajos Kossuth quoted in I. Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848-1849* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 292-3.

⁴³ ‘Making Sound History’.

'Their God is the God of freedom of the Hungarian country, and it is to his altar that they await the Magyar. [...] Let the sacred martyrs in their mortal remains be blessed, let them in their spirits be blessed with the best knowledge of the fatherland's God of liberty, through eternity. 6th October will find me, who is unable to throw myself down in the dust of the Hungarian Golgotha [...] and asking the God of the Magyars with ardent prayer to make victorious the appeal that searches the very marrow of the bone and sounds from the lips of Hungaria to the Hungarian Nation. So be it. Amen.'⁴⁴

The impact of this speech is not to be underestimated. At 88 years of age this elder statesman in exile still wielded the power to electrify the crowds and incense his enemies, as would be demonstrated once again at his funeral only four years later in 1894.⁴⁵ The impression of hearing Kossuth on the new and surely remarkable technology of the phonograph would have certainly added to the importance of the occasion. [It also marked the end of the communicative culture of the memory of the Arad Martyrs, as Kossuth's last public speech gave way to the hard, political memory of the monument.] Listeners and readers alike were left in no doubt that the statue of the thirteen generals had become a story of Hungarian glory and no longer of international resistance against imperial rule.

The construction of the statue certainly fitted in with the monument craze that swept most of the Habsburg Lands during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is important to note, however, that the Freedom Monument preceded many of the Hungarian imperial-nationalist monuments and statues both in its planning and construction. The Freedom Monument can therefore be viewed as a pioneering project for the ensuing public celebration of the Hungarian Kingdom. The Matthias Corvinus Statue in Cluj, which would later be the site of Romanian-Hungarian memory disputes in the 1990s, was commissioned in 1893 and inaugurated in 1902.⁴⁶ Similarly, the Millennium Monuments, which sprang up in seven places across Hungary in 1896, had only been planned and signed off in 1890 and 1896 respectively.⁴⁷ Other examples include the Eötvös Statue and the Deák Monument, both of which designed by Huszár, the original architect of the Arad monument. These statues became important national markers in Budapest's cityscape.⁴⁸ This was

Commented [FM1]: Bitte etwas umformulieren: 1. Die erste Hälfte sollte man auf den ungarischen Fall begrenzen; 2. die zweite Hälfte des Satzes ist mir nicht ganz klar.

⁴⁴ For both the English and the original Hungarian version see *ibid.*

⁴⁵ D. Barends, 'Trafficking in Photographs: Representational Power and the Case of Lajos Kossuth, Budapest 1894', *History & Memory*, 22:22 (2010), pp. 34-67.

⁴⁶ M. Feischmidt, *Ethnizität als Konstruktion und Erfahrung: Symbolstreit und Alltagskultur im siebenbürgischen Cluj* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), pp. 68-9; see also Brubaker et al, *Nationalist Politics*, pp. 136-51.

⁴⁷ Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation', pp. 113-5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

part of a Magyarisation enterprise in which a small number of architects and designers, including names such as Adolf Huszár, Albert Schickedanz, and György Zala, devised plans for statues and monuments across the Kingdom in order to nationalise space – in a cultural and physical sense. Yet this monument frenzy was not merely a Hungarian nationalist phenomenon. It mirrored a European pattern of publicly celebrating and glorifying individuals and moments central to an imperial view of the world. This was not just the case in the Habsburg Empire, but also elsewhere such as in the British Empire where ever-grander monuments were regarded as vital to portraying imperial power, especially vis-à-vis its rival empires.⁴⁹

Thus, this one-time site of loss and imperial victory was converted into one of assertive, indeed aggressive Magyarisation, or in other words an exclusively Hungarian national site. Responses to the statue differed throughout the wider region. Austrian reactions were rather muted. On the days that followed the grand opening, Austrian newspapers mostly snubbed news of this event and instead focused on day-to-day politics. The Linz newspaper *Tagespost* chose to run a story on elections in Serbia.⁵⁰ The *Wiener Zeitung* also ignored the event altogether.⁵¹ Only the radical Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* ran a sympathetic piece on the unveiling of the statue in which it admonished the youth of Vienna not to forget the legacy of the thirteen martyrs. The article compared the commemoration in Arad to the enforced silence vis-à-vis the 48ers in Austria. It thereby not only maintained its oppositional stance towards government politics but also associated the legacy of the thirteen generals with its original anti-imperial connotation.⁵²

Romanian perceptions of the meaning of this event, however, were more defensive. As Margit Feischmidt has pointed out, there was some resistance to the erection and unveiling of this statue. This, too, tended to be articulated through silence as well as general allusions to Magyarisation.⁵³ Feischmidt also outlines three categories into which the monuments erected in Hungary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could be divided: a) those based on Habsburg-imperial themes, b) those expressing Hungarian nationalist mythology, and c) symbols of 'national-

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Tori Smith's study on the Victoria monument unveiled in London in 1911 and framed very much as a response to French grandeur: T. Smith, "'A Grand Work of Noble Conception': The Victoria Memorial and Imperial London", in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 21-39.

⁵⁰ 'Die Wahlen in Serbien', *Tagespost* (07 October 1890), p.1.

⁵¹ *Wiener Zeitung*, Nos. 232-35, 07-10 October 1890.

⁵² 'Das Denkmal in Arad', *Neue Freie Presse* (07 October 1890), pp. 1-2.

⁵³ Feischmidt cites newspapers from Braşov and Sibiu; see Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation', p. 123.

democratic', anti-Habsburg sentiment.⁵⁴ The Arad martyrology, however, points to a development of imperial-nationalism – one that mimicked the Habsburg-imperial mode of memorialisation while demoting the anti-imperial aspect to a peripheral role. Magyarisation was therefore not solely nationalist, but was in fact perceived as an imperial-national process. Amongst Hungarians the glorification of Magyar control was interpreted as a move towards reinstating former glory. Minorities, too, saw these processes as Hungarian attempts to create a Magyar empire.

In this milieu, rejection or silence was not the only response. The aggressive and all-pervasive nature of Magyarisation became evident in public avowals of Hungarian greatness by minorities. German-language newspapers such as the *Temeswarer Zeitung* or *Arader Zeitung* saw the unveiling of the statue as a true expression of Hungarian nationalist propaganda. On 5th October 1890 the *Temeswarer Zeitung*, a German-Swabian newspaper, glowed with Hungarian patriotism by pronouncing that 'finally, on 6th October [the day of the unveiling of the statue] every loyal Hungarian subject (*Untertan*) will be able to go on a pilgrimage to Arad with their heads held high.'⁵⁵ A day after the ceremonies the same newspaper proclaimed that 'yesterday every Hungarian heart was an altar...when the jewels of the Hungarian hearts united to form one big jewel, which was grafted by Hungarian artistry to shape an eternal monument [...] with blood for our fatherland.'⁵⁶ What such passages reveal is not a love for all things Hungarian by the Swabian minority, but rather the extent to which Magyarisation had become more and more assertive by constricting public space and public forums. The censored press thus relayed a Hungarian, nationalist narrative that surrounded not just this event, but politics in general. This site of defeated liberation against imperial rule, therefore, was itself turned into site of a new imperial rule.

Romanian Arad

This was most certainly understood as such by the minorities in the region and in particular by Romanians. Under Hungarian rule, Romanian political activists were spurred on in their pursuit of cultural autonomy and independence. Cultural movements such as *Astra* (*Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Romanian's People Culture*) saw their future within Romania and understood their relationship with Hungarian cultural claims as one of oppression, rivalry, and competition.⁵⁷ They did not have to wait for long to see their ambitions fulfilled.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 112-3.

⁵⁵ 'Zum 06 Oktober', *Temeswarer Zeitung* (05 October 1890), p. 2.

⁵⁶ 'Die Arader Feier', *Temeswarer Zeitung* (07 October 1890), p. 1.

⁵⁷ J. P. Niessen, 'Museum, Nationality, and Public Research Libraries in Nineteenth Century Transylvania', *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, 41:3 (2006), p. 306. For a good history of *Astra* see T.

Following the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War, Arad became part of the newly unified Greater Romanian Kingdom. This fundamental change resulted in a rebranding of city space, the renaming of street names, and alterations to the commemorative landscape of the newly acquired Romanian territories. Indeed, the year 1918 was not just a moment of great change for former minorities in their new independent states, but also for the commemorative landscape within Hungary. The much-loathed monument of the Habsburg general Heinrich Hentzi in Budapest, for instance, was duly removed as part of the 'iconoclasm' that accompanied the end of the dual monarchy.⁵⁸

The initial response by local and governmental authorities towards the memory landscape within Romania was uncoordinated and varied. Hence, it was not until 1929 that a Commission of Public Monuments was set up in Bucharest. This had been intended to comment solely on the artistic value of new projects for monuments. However, as Maria Bucur has demonstrated, the territories ceded to Romania after the First World War witnessed an upsurge in aggressively nationalistic local committees, which often took matters into their own hands.⁵⁹ Arad's commemorative restructuring was also quite a chaotic and, at times, local affair designed to rebalance the ethnic look of the city and to settle scores with Hungarians. A local committee in Arad, set up under the auspices of the Orthodox bishop of Arad, thus petitioned to erect a cross commemorating the 'massacre of almost 100 Romanians during the war'. The central commission reacted quite tepidly.⁶⁰ Romanian commemorative politics were by no means clear cut, but often erratic, contradictory, and parochial.

Other efforts in decolonising and Romanising space in Arad County were more successful. Both the commemorative plaque for the eccentric Romanian inventor and pilot Aurel Vlaicu in his hometown of Bîrăneşti and the Aurel Vlaicu fountain in Arad received great support from Bucharest, including from the future Prime Minister Octavian Goga.⁶¹ Similarly, both local and central initiatives sought to rectify Arad's Hungarian appearance by addressing the issue of Hungarian monuments. In July 1922, the mayor of Arad, the prefect of the county, and central government in

Dunlap, 'Astra and the Appeal of the Nation: Power and Autonomy in Late-Nineteenth Century Transylvania', *Austrian Yearbook*, 34 (2003), pp. 215-46.

⁵⁸ See D. Gamboni, *Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (Chicago: Reaktion, 2007), pp. 25-50 for a general overview of iconoclasm in the late modern period. For a detailed study of the Hentzi monument, see M. L. Miller, 'A Monumental Debate in Budapest: The Hentzi Statue and the Limits of Austro-Hungarian Reconciliation, 1852-1918', *Austrian Yearbook*, 40 (2009), pp. 215-37.

⁵⁹ Bucur, *Heroes and Victims*, pp. 132-7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁶¹ Primaria Municipului Arad, Acte Administrative, 10-1924.

Bucharest sought to establish a quick solution to existing Hungarian edifices.⁶² The Martyrs' Statue and a statue of Lajos Kossuth were duly earmarked for removal and the mayor of Arad dealt with the issue temporarily by erecting walls around them. Three years later, in July 1925, the Arad Thirteen were dismantled and moved from what was now called Avram Iancu Square – named after a Romanian hero of the 1848 revolution – to a warehouse deep inside Arad Fortress on the other side of the Mureş river.

Some Hungarians had fought against such a public purge and even liaised with the government in Budapest over the issues surrounding the statues on former Hungarian lands. The eminent politician Béla Barabás would carefully recall his efforts at protecting the monument in his memoirs.⁶³ Despite all the changes in connotation that this monument had undergone, Barabás still insisted in 1929 that it was a 'freedom monument'.⁶⁴ Romanians disagreed with such sentiments and praised the removal of the statue. Philosopher and sociologist Nicolae Petrescu celebrated this act of liberation from Hungarian jingoism in the newly established literary magazine *Tribuna Nouă*: 'The monument of the 13 martyrs has finally been removed from Avram Iancu Square. Everyone agrees that this chauvinist Hungarian monument had no place in Romanian Arad. It has gone forever.'⁶⁵

To be sure, this was part of a new wave of Romanian nationalism, but it was targeted primarily at Hungarian imperial-nationalism. While Hungarian statues were in the process of being dislodged, the Swabian community constructed its own monuments to its dead. In Arad Nou, a Swabian war memorial, commemorating the Swabian dead during World War One, was erected outside the Catholic Church in 1924/25 just as the statue of the Arad Thirteen was being demolished.⁶⁶ It thus cannot go unnoticed that it was precisely the presence of the Martyrs' Monument, which was perceived as a Hungarian imperial-nationalist statement, not merely the presence of non-Romanian monuments *per se*. It was a reminder of Hungary's yesteryear Magyarisation programmes, which – according to many commentators at the time – was still a danger and continued to hold back the Romanian nation. In a similar vein, another commentator claimed in *Tribuna Nouă* that '[f]or the past six years [since 1919], this monument has stood not only for Hungarian freedom but also for the chauvinism directed against us, in the centre of our town, defiant in the face of all things Romanian, and inspired by the naïve hope of foreigners for a future many of them had wanted.'⁶⁷ What many Hungarians wanted was a return to former

Commented [FM2]: "short-hand" for what?

Commented [FM3]: Gibt es einen direkten Bezug auf die "martyrs" oder ist das nur ein typisches Kriegerdenkmal?

Commented [FM4]: Etwas unklar; folgt das aus der Zeitgleichheit der Entfernung in Arad und Errichtung in Arad Nou?

⁶² Primaria Municipului Arad, Acte Administrative, 21-1922.

⁶³ See B. Barabás, *Emlékirtaim* (Arad, 1929).

⁶⁴ Barabás quoted in Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation', p. 125.

⁶⁵ N. Petrescu, 'Fântâna lui Avram Iancu', *Tribuna Nouă*, (26 July 1925).

⁶⁶ Petri, *Heimatbuch*, pp. 234-5.

⁶⁷ P. Faur, 'Monumentul – fântână al lui Avram Iancu', *Tribuna Nouă*, (23 July 1925).

Hungarian glory. The site of the statue had therefore gone from representing a space of imperial aggression and defeated liberty, to a site of nationalism, and by the interwar period back to a site of imperial aggression – this time, however, attributed to Hungary's position in the dual monarchy.

Epilogue: Anti-imperialism, imperialism, and reconciliation?

The "Thirteen Martyrs" had not 'gone forever', as the writer in *Tribuna Nouă* had predicted. Deemed unsuited to the topography of Romanian Arad in 1925, the monument then embarked on an eighty year journey. It remained in a warehouse in Arad Castle for twenty-five years before the communists reassembled it, albeit still within Arad Fortress, in 1949/50. Although the early communist period in both Romania and Hungary was marked by a reinvention of commemorative practices and the toppling of statues,⁶⁸ the monument and the legacy of the generals remained curiously resilient to this challenge. There were in fact efforts to rehabilitate the thirteen generals as anti-imperialist fighters. Romania and Hungary appeared to be moving towards a rapprochement on the issue, but this was cut short by the Hungarian Revolution in October 1956.⁶⁹ For the remainder of the Cold War, the Arad monument stayed out of sight, while the original site in the centre of Arad continued to be associated with the politically useful figure of Avram Iancu. In the meantime, the monument was entirely airbrushed from publications on the town of Arad.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Katalin Sinkó calls the processes of eviscerating the commemorative topography in the early communist period *Denkmalsturz*. See K. Sinkó, 'Zur Entstehung der staatlichen und nationalen Feiertage in Ungarn (1850-1991)', in E. Brix und H. Stekl (eds), *Der Kampf um das Gedächtnis: Öffentliche Gedenktage in Mitteleuropa* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), p. 266.

⁶⁹ Feischmidt, 'Die Verortung der Nation', p. 126.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, I. Niculescu (ed.), *Arad: Monografie* (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1979), pp. 57-79 and V. Velcea, I. Velcea, and O. Mîndruț, *Județul Arad* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1979), pp. 128-40. The latter only included censuses from 1930 on and omitted the category of ethnicity in an attempt to make Arad appear less Hungarian.



Image 1.3 and 1.4: Reconciliation Park in 2011 with the Martyr's Monument on the left, the Hungarian, Romanian, and EU flag in the centre, and the Arch of Triumph on the right.⁷¹

It was only at the end of the Cold War that the statue was rediscovered. It became the subject of much public debate when it was transferred to a courtyard of a monastery in 1999, after a first attempt at restoring the statue to the Arad topography in October 1999 had failed in some acrimony. Neither the Romanian Prime Minister Radu Vasile nor Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán took part in the scheduled opening ceremony of the newly-designed Park of Hungarian-Romanian Friendship on the sesquicentennial of the execution of the Arad Martyrs on 6th October 1999. Vasile and other Romanian officials regarded the issue to be too Hungarian and did not want to clash with Arad municipal council or high-profile politicians such as Ion Iliescu who opposed and eventually scuppered the idea in 1999.⁷² Orbán responded to this snub in kind by returning to Budapest to address the issue of Hungarians in Hungary's neighbouring countries. Four years later, in May 2003, under the new Romanian and Hungarian Prime Ministers Adrian Năstase and Péter Medgyessy, the statue was prepared for relocation to a location close to its original site in the city of Arad. This new square, previously designated as the Park of Hungarian-Romanian Friendship, was named Reconciliation Park.⁷³ In an echo of the 1890 opening ceremony, the belated sesquicentennial of the execution of the

Commented [FM5]: Fand aber fünf Jahre zu spät statt – evtl. kurz darauf hinweisen.

Commented [FM6]: War auch der Name des Platzes eine bewusste Anlehnung an den offiziellen Titel der Eröffnungszereemonie von 1890?

⁷¹ Photos taken by the author.

⁷² C. Lovatt and D. Lovatt, 'Romanian News Roundup', *Central Europe Review*, 1:16 (1999) at www.cereview.org/99/16/romanianews16.html [accessed: 25 January 2012].

⁷³ It is unclear whether this was a deliberate imitation of the Festival of Reconciliation in 1890.

Arad Martyrs was marked by the unveiling of the statue. Some 7,000 Hungarians and a number of belligerent and booing Romanian nationalists attended the event.⁷⁴

Yet in the spirit of the EU accession of both Hungary and Romania in 2004 and 2007 respectively, the Romanian Minister for Culture and Religious Affairs, Răzvan Theodorescu, tried to defuse any tensions by stating that 'Hungarians and Romanians, Romanians and Hungarians, we can look together, definitely together, towards the future'.⁷⁵ Jonathan Scheele, the delegate of the European Commission, also emphasised the reconciliatory aspect of this new memory regime claiming that '[i]t is the only path for a common future of the two countries'.⁷⁶ Béla Markó, head of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, agreed that the only path for both peoples was that of reconciliation within the EU.⁷⁷ The question of empire and nationalism was thus neutralised by introducing a rather ephemeral and unconvincing solution: Under EU observation and using the euphemistic language of 'reconciliation', the two sides still face each other, as the Romanian 48ers continue to watch on from their Arch of Triumph and the Hungaria gazes beyond to a more glorious Hungarian past.

What has been played out on the site(s) of contention and over the monument are claims to space and territory. The monument and opposition to the monument quickly became part of a national and imperial power game. Oscillating between anti-imperial, imperial-national, and chauvinist perceptions, the statue's biography tells a story of the complexity of changing memory cultures in the prism of empire, its subsequent break-up, and the vexed politicised and ideological debates thereafter. In this way, the commemoration of the 150th anniversary between 1999 and 2004 encapsulated the politics of memory that surrounded this site and statue: Imperial in origin, national in recognition, and political in its uses.

Commented [FM7]: Fand aber fünf Jahre zu spät statt – evtl. kurz darauf hinweisen.

Commented [FM8]: Unklare Formulierung – was wurde 1890 "re-established"?

Commented [FM9]: Jubiläum von 1854?

⁷⁴ 'Hungarian Premier attends Inauguration of 'Reconciliation Park' in Arad', *Newsline RFE/RL* (26 April 2004) at www.rferl.org/content/article/1143145.html [accessed: 25 January 2012].

⁷⁵ Official website of the Reconciliation Park at www.welcometoromania.ro/Arad/Arad_Parcu_Reconcilierii_r.htm [accessed: 25 January 2012].

⁷⁶ 'Thousands of Persons at the Inauguration of Reconciliation Park in Arad', *Big News Magazine* (26 April 2004) <http://bignewsmagazine.com/2004/04/thousands-of-persons-at-the-inauguration-of-reconciliation-park-in-arad/> [accessed: 25 January 2012].

⁷⁷ Ibid.

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